

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 6252

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, LA

SUBJECT: THEMES FOR USE WITH PRESS FOLLOWING SIGNING OF PROTOCOL  
IN VIENTIANE

BEGIN SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE THAT DEPARTMENT AND OTHER USG SPOKESMEN SHOULD BE PREPARED TO PROJECT A CLEAR AND POSITIVE POSITION ON THE MEANING AND U.S. VIEW OF THE LAO PROTOCOL WHICH MAY SOON BE INITIALLED AND SUBSEQUENTLY SIGNED. FOR THIS PURPOSE, WE HAVE SKETCHED OUT FOLLOWING "THEMES" WHICH MIGHT BE DRAWN ON AS THE BASIS FOR SPOKESMEN'S REMARKS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE UNITED STATES WELCOMES THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF NEGOTIATIONS ON AN IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL TO CARRY OUT THE FEBRUARY 21, 1973, AGREEMENT ON THE RESTORATION OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN LAOS. THE FEBRUARY AGREEMENT AND ITS IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL WHICH HAS JUST BEEN SIGNED PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A LAOS SETTLEMENT WHICH ACHIEVES OBJECTIVES WE HAVE SOUGHT IN ALL OF INDOCHINA; IT TRANSFERS THE CONFLICT FROM THE MILITARY BATTLEFIELD TO THE POLITICAL ARENA AND IT CREATES A FRAMEWORK FOR RECONCILIATION WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE BETWEEN THE PARTIES INVOLVED. THE USG ENCOURAGED AND ASSISTED THE RLG TO ATTAIN A POSITION FROM WHICH IT COULD NEGOTIATE A REASONABLE SOLUTION. WE HOPE THE AGREEMENT WILL SECURE THE PEACE AND FREEDOM FROM  
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AGGRESSION WHICH PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA AND HIS PEOPLE

HAVE PURSUED FOR SO LONG AT SUCH GREAT SACRIFICE.

2. THE IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL WHICH HAS JUST BEEN SIGNED SPELLS OUT IN DETAIL THE BROAD PRINCIPLES OF THE FEBRUARY AGREEMENT WHICH THE TWO LAO PARTIES ACCEPTED AS A BASIS OF A SETTLEMENT IN LAOS. HENCE THE IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL COULD NOT AND DID NOT BREAK NEW GROUND BUT MERELY EXPLAINS HOW GENERAL PRINCIPLES ARE TO BE CARRIED OUT IN PRACTICE AND HOW THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS AGREED TO IN FEBRUARY WILL BE STAFFED AND WILL FUNCTION ONCE ACTIVATED.

3. THE IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL, LIKE THE FEBRUARY VIENTIANE AGREEMENT, IS A LAO DOCUMENT ELABORATED BY THE TWO LAO PARTIES. BOTH LAO PARTIES ACCEPT THE 1954 AND 1962 AGREEMENTS ON LAOS AS THE BASIS OF THIS NEW SETTLEMENT IN LAOS. THE 1962 AGREEMENT CALLS FOR THE NEUTRALIZATION OF LAOS AND THIS PRINCIPLE, WHICH THE U.S. HAS LONG SUPPORTED, IS THE CORNERSTONE OF THE TWO DOCUMENTS SIGNED BY THE TWO LAO PARTIES THIS YEAR.

4. ABOVE ALL, THE IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL AND THE FEBRUARY VIENTIANE AGREEMENT PROVIDE FOR A TOTAL SETTLEMENT OF THE LAO PROBLEM. MORE THAN A CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENT, THESE AGREEMENTS ESTABLISH MACHINERY FOR THE TRANSITION PERIOD LEADING TO THE HOLDING OF GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT GOVERNMENT IN LAOS. IN THIS RESPECT, LAOS IS THE FIRST COUNTRY AMONG THE INDOCHINA STATES TO HAVE ESTABLISHED THE BASIS FOR AN ENDURING SETTLEMENT.

5. THE IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL IS A DOCUMENT OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO LAO PARTIES. CONCESSIONS WERE MADE BY BOTH SIDES ON ISSUES CLOSE TO THE HEART OF THE CONTESTANTS TO ACHIEVE THIS RESULT. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PATHET LAO WANTED THEIR MAN TO BE SINGLE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT WANTED NONE. THE PROTOCOL CALLS FOR TWO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS; ONE FROM THE PATHET LAO; ONE FROM THE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS. EACH SIDE WANTED CONTROL OVER THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT WILL RETAIN INTERIOR AND THE PATHET LAO RECEIVED ANOTHER MINISTRY IN EXCHANGE. IN THE WORDS OF ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE LAO GOVERNMENT, "IN THIS SETTLEMENT, THERE IS NEITHER VICTOR NOR VANQUISHED."

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6. THE FACT THAT BOTH SIDES APPROACHED THIS AGREEMENT WITH A VIEW TOWARDS ENDING THE MILITARY CONFLICT IS BORNE OUT BY THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LAO CEASEFIRE SINCE IT ENTERED INTO FORCE ON FEBRUARY 22, 1973. BEFORE THE CEASEFIRE, MILITARY CONTACT BETWEEN THE TWO OPPOSING SIDES RAN AT ABOUT 265 INCIDENTS PER WEEK. DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST, THE AVERAGE WAS 10-14 INCIDENTS PER WEEK. BEFORE THE CEASEFIRE, ABOUT 54 ROYAL LAO SOLDIERS WERE

KILLED PER WEEK. DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST, THE WEEKLY AVERAGE WAS 3. FOR THE CEASEFIRE TO BE AS EFFECTIVE AS THIS, THE GOODWILL AND COOPERATION OF BOTH SIDES WAS NEEDED.

7. THE UNITED STATES STANDS READY TO CONTINUE COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE TO THE NEW PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE FORMED SHORTLY IN LAOS. TOWARD THAT END, THE ADMINISTRATION IS CONFIDENT THAT CONGRESS WILL MAKE AVAILABLE THE NECESSARY FUNDS TO SUPPORT LAOS IN THE TASK OF RECONSTRUCTION AND RECONCILIATION WHICH LIES AHEAD.

8. THE UNITED STATES WILL, OF COURSE, BE GUIDED BY THE PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT AND ITS IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL AND BY THE WISHES OF THE NEW PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA. WE EXPECT ALL OTHER PARTIES TO DO THE SAME AND TO RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF LAOS. THE FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL LAO GOVERNMENT WILL SHOW THEIR GOOD FAITH IN THE SIXTH-DAY PERIOD FOLLOWING THE FORMATION OF THE NEW LAO GOVERNMENT IN COMPLYING WITH THE AGREEMENT AND WILL OBSERVE CLOSELY THAT THIS GOOD FAITH IS MATCHED BY THOSE WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE PATHET LAO.

9. WHILE THE PREVIOUS TWO ATTEMPTS IN 1958 AND 1962 TO RESOLVE THE LAO PROBLEM TOOK PLACE IN A COLD WAR CLIMATE, THE PRESENT LAO EFFORT IS UNDERTAKEN IN A PERIOD OF INTERNATIONAL DETENTE. WHILE IN THE PAST THE MAJOR WORLD POWERS MAY HAVE BEEN PURSUING CONFLICTING POLICIES IN LAOS, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT FOR THE TIME BEING THESE SAME NATIONS ARE PURSUING PARALLEL POLICIES OF SUPPORTING PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA IN HIS GOAL OF ACHIEVING A NEGOTIATED RECONCILIATION. THIS FACTOR INCREASES THE CHANCES OF SUCCESS OF THIS LATEST LAO INITIATIVES.

10. WE WILL HAVE TO AWAIT RECEIPT OF THE TEXT OF THE PROTOCOL TO MAKE MEANINGFUL COMMENT ON THE INDIVIDUAL PROVISIONS. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM THE REPORTS RECEIVED SO FAR, THE DOCUMENT REFLECTS THE CONCESSIONS MADE BY BOTH SIDES. THE FACT THAT PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA WILL CONTINUE TO HEAD THE NEW GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO US THE BEST INDICATION THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE TEMPERED BY MODERATION AND WILL PURSUE A COURSE OF TRUE NEUTRALITY IN PERFECTING THE INDEPENDENCE AND UNITY OF THE LAO KINGDOM.  
DEAN

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